



AOT in Action

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from Director Sherry Henry:

Good afternoon,

Congratulations to the P.F. Chang's Rock 'n' Roll Arizona Marathon and ½ Marathon on its 10th anniversary! AOT has proudly sponsored this dynamic event each year, along with our industry partners, the Greater Phoenix Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), Scottsdale CVB and Tempe CVB. This year the event will be held Sunday, January 20, 2013.

More than 25,000 runners from across the globe are expected to participate in this incredible event. As a sponsor of one of the most popular courses on the marathon circuit, we have taken great measures to ensure that we reach out to every participant and encourage them to discover the unique travel adventures that can only be found in Arizona. And with the addition of the Rock 'n' Roll Arizona Bike Tour, we're certain to introduce even more participants to Arizona's amazing travel offerings.

Good luck to all the participants!

Sherry Henry
Director, Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News

Meet British and Irish Media Representatives on a Mission to the UK

The Arizona Office of Tourism is pleased to invite Arizona CVBs, Chambers and DMOs to join us in England and Ireland on a week-long media mission to Dublin and London, May 20 – 24, 2013. The format of the mission will depend on the number of Arizona delegates, however we anticipate meeting with approximately 25 – 30 key media representatives. Registration is

\$1,250, plus travel expenses and shipping. For more information please contact Mary Rittmann at mrtrittmann@azot.gov or 602-364-3730.

Meet French Media Representatives at Arizona Luncheon

The Arizona Office of Tourism is pleased to invite Arizona tourism suppliers to join us in Paris, France for a media luncheon on Wednesday, Feb. 27. Participation is open to Arizona tourism suppliers with preference given to CVBs, Chambers and DMOs. We are anticipating approximately 15 key media representatives to attend. Registration is \$600 and is limited to one representative per company. For more information please contact Mary Rittmann at 602-364-3730 or via email at mrtrittmann@azot.gov.

Arizona's 2013 Official State Visitor's Guide Now Available!

The Arizona Office of Tourism's 2013 Arizona Official State Visitor's Guide (OSVG), and accompanying Official State Visitor's Map is now available free of charge to travelers. Abundant with valuable Arizona tourist information including traveling tips and statewide accommodations, the 104-page OSVG includes articles and regional information celebrating the state's travel destinations and activities including scenic road trips, family-fun adventures, local cuisine, outdoor experiences, Arizona's American Indian heritage and Wild West history. Travelers can order or download a copy by visiting arizonaguide.com. DMOs and local visitor information centers (LVICs) interested in ordering the new guides can contact Loretta Belonio, Fulfillment Manager, at 602-364-3725 or lblonio@azot.gov.

Upcoming Events & Activities

Germany Media Mission

Dates: February 4 - 8, 2013

Location: Munich and Hamburg, Germany; Zurich, Switzerland

France Media Mission

Date: February 27, 2013

Location: Paris, France

Amazing Gazing: Arizona from Above and Below Media Tour

Date: March 4 – 9, 2013

Location: Safford, Bisbee, Sierra Vista, Tucson, Tempe

Industry News

U.S. Travel Says "Fiscal Cliff" Deal May Not Be Positive for Travel Industry

Washington may have dodged a bullet when the Senate and House enacted H.R. 8, the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, thus avoiding the "fiscal cliff," but the U.S. Travel

Association, in a message from Roger Dow, its president and CEO, is pointing out how that the legislation may not necessarily be positive for the travel industry.

U.S. Travel said the most significant impact of the legislation is that it does not resolve the so-called "sequester" that was enacted in 2011 requiring cuts to government agency budgets of approximately 8 percent for fiscal year 2013. Instead, the bill delays the effects of the sequester for two months.

U.S. Travel said it has previously written to congressional leaders about the damaging impacts the sequester would have on government agencies that facilitate travel, most importantly Department of Homeland Security, Department of Transportation and Department of State. "We are primarily concerned about the ability of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the Transportation Security Administration to manage increased travel loads on a reduced budget," wrote Roger Dow, president and CEO of U.S. Travel in a note to members. "Cuts to CBP, for example, could lead to regular, multi-hour long lines to clear customs at major gateway airports. In addition, the sequester would jeopardize longer-term projects like the Federal Aviation Administration's NextGen air traffic modernization program."

U.S. Travel also pointed out that tax law changes could negatively affect leisure, group and business travel because it will hit discretionary income. Most of the legislation addresses personal and corporate tax policy. For example, tax rates will permanently rise to Clinton-era levels (39.6 percent) for families with income above \$450,000 and individuals earning more than \$400,000. All income below the threshold will permanently be taxed at Bush-era rates. >> [Full Article](#) (*Travel Pulse*, Jan. 6)

Travel Leaders Group Unveils Business Travel Trends Survey for 2013

Travel Leaders Group's annual Travel Trends Survey, released Jan. 4, finds that 80 percent of the group's business-focused travel agents are forecasting that clients will be traveling as much or more than last year. Fewer than 10 percent of those polled say their clients will be traveling less, which paradoxically may prove to be the reason why the survey data also reveals that "cost savings" will be the most important factor for business travel clients in 2013.

Conducted Nov. 19 to Dec. 16, 2012, the survey is based on responses from 335 Travel Leaders Group owners, managers and frontline travel experts throughout the United States who identified that 50 percent or more of their portfolio consists of business travel clients. Travel Leaders Group, with collective travel sales of \$18 billion, includes the Travel Leaders Franchise Group, Tzell Travel Group, Nexion, Protravel International and Vacation.com.

"Despite the hype of the 'fiscal cliff,' our travel agents, nationwide, expressed optimism that Congress would come through at the 11th hour -- which it did," said Barry Liben, Travel Leaders Group CEO. "Over 77 percent of our business travel experts polled indicated they were optimistic about their business heading into 2013, while another 18 percent stated they were neutral about the coming year. Finding ways to trim costs and save on business travel are still paramount, and business travelers who use a corporate travel management company have a distinct advantage because they can travel more frequently as they contain costs on each individual trip."

When Travel Leaders Group agents were asked what their business travel clients indicate about the amount of travel they expect to book for 2013 compared to 2012, the results were: 38.7 percent said bookings will increase compared to last year, 40.8 percent said booking levels will remain on par with last year, while 9.8 percent said booking levels will decline compared to last year. (*Travel Pulse*, Jan. 6)

IATA Survey Finds Higher for Air Travel in November

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) released traffic results for November 2012 showing an improvement in both passenger and air freight demand. Air travel was up 4.6 percent compared to November 2011, and higher than October's 2.9 percent increase. Air freight volumes edged up 1.6 percent over the same period after declining 2.6 percent in October, year over year. Passenger capacity rose 3.2 percent and load factor improved one percentage point to 77.3 percent compared to the year-ago period.

"November brought some positive signs for air transport demand—particularly for air cargo," said Tony Tyler, IATA's director general and CEO. "It is premature to consider this a turning point for air cargo markets in terms of bouncing back and regaining lost ground. But when coupled with positive economic developments in the U.S. and an improvement in business confidence in recent months, the conditions are aligning to see a return to growth in 2013. In 2013 we expect that cargo volumes will grow 1.4 percent, and passenger traffic will increase by 4.5 percent worldwide. Passenger markets have held up better than cargo in the face of adverse economic conditions. But the current level of air travel is just 2 percent higher than at the start of 2012. This is considerably weaker than the long-term average growth rate."

Compared to October, November passenger traffic grew 0.6 percent. Most of the growth came from domestic markets, particularly China. November international passenger demand grew 5.6 percent compared to November 2011. However, the month-on-month increase was only 0.2 percent, indicating that year-on-year growth was more likely owing to depressed demand a year ago. Nevertheless, emerging markets in particular continued to perform well, and capacity increased 3.1 percent compared to a year ago. Load factor rose 1.8 percentage points to 76.3 percent.

Asia-Pacific carriers experienced the strongest growth among the major regions, with demand up 6.2 percent year-on-year, on a capacity increase of 2.5 percent. Some of this growth, however, likely reflected depressed results in 2011 owing to flooding in Thailand. The growth of 1.7 percent in November compared to October could be due to volatility in the data given the extended period of slower growth since early 2012. IATA said airlines in the region have experienced increased competition on long-haul markets, and continued improvement in the month-on-month growth would be needed to determine a change in trend. Load factor surged 2.6 percentage points to 75.7 percent.

North American airlines' demand was up 2.6 percent compared to November 2011, an improvement on the weak 0.2 percent growth in October, when Hurricane Sandy impacted international flights across the North Atlantic. Airlines in the region have experienced some of the slower growth rates in international traffic throughout the year, but that is largely a result of tight capacity management rather than particularly weak demand. Capacity climbed 0.4 percent, pushing load factor up 1.6 percentage points to 79.6 percent, the highest for any region.

European carriers saw demand grow 4 percent compared to November 2011, while capacity climbed 0.8 percent and load factor was 77.8 percent, up 2.3 percentage points. Traffic rose 0.5 percent compared to October. Middle East airlines' demand expanded 10.5 percent compared to November 2011, second best among the regions, continuing the exceptional growth throughout the year. However, this was outstripped by a capacity increase of 11.2 percent, which resulted in the load factor falling 0.5 percentage points to 73.5 percent. Month-on-month growth was 0.3 percent.

Latin American carriers posted demand growth of 11 percent compared to November 2011, the strongest of any region. Although the Latin American economy has suffered from the Eurozone crisis and China's slower growth this year, strong domestic demand in several major economies has provided continued support to air travel. Capacity climbed 9.8 percent leading to an improvement in load factor of 0.8 percentage points to 76.3 percent. Compared to October, traffic rose 2.9 percent.

African airlines saw demand expand 5 percent year-on-year but capacity growth was held in check, at 4.4 percent. Load factor rose 0.4 percentage points to 64.7 percent but remains the lowest of any region. Compared to October, African traffic was up just 0.1 percent.

Domestic traffic worldwide rose 3 percent compared to November 2011, up over the 2.4 percent year-on-year growth reported in October. However, the month-on-month increase was just 1.2 percent. Capacity growth of 3.3 percent outstripped demand and load factor dipped 0.2 percentage points to 79.1 percent.

U.S. demand travel was up 1.1 percent, but capacity expanded 2.7 percent leading to a 1.3 percentage point drop in load factor to a still industry-leading 82.1 percent. Demand rose just 0.6 percent compared to October. Chinese demand grew 7.7 percent, lagging strong capacity expansion of 10.3 percent. Load factor fell 1.9 percentage points to 79.1 percent. Compared to October Chinese domestic travel increased 1.9 percent. Indian demand fell by 6.5 percent, reflecting the slowing economy and sinking business confidence. Month-on-month traffic increased by 3.2 percent, the second month of positive growth in a row. However, it is not clear if India has turned the corner as business fundamentals remain weak. Japan traffic grew 4.4 percent year-on-year, eclipsing a 1.5 percent increase in capacity and pushing load factor up 1.9 percentage points to 67.3 percent--which was still the weakest for any market. Compared to October, demand rose 3 percent. Brazil recorded strong demand growth of 10.2 percent. Brazil has been the fastest-growing domestic market for two consecutive months. Capacity fell 2.1 percent and load factor jumped 8.3 percentage points to 73.9 percent. Compared to October, traffic rose 2.3 percent. (*Travel Pulse*, Jan. 9)

Oracle State Park re-opens for weekends February through April

Oracle State Park, Center for Environmental Education, will re-open to the public on Saturdays and Sundays beginning February 2, 2013 from 8am to 5pm through April 28, 2013. Spring activities will include the popular guided bird walks and hikes, tours of the historic Kannally ranch house, and environmental education school programs are offered weekdays by reservation.

Oracle State Park has trails that offer varying degrees of difficulty including a four-mile section of the Arizona Trail that transects the park. Bring your camera, binoculars, notebook, sketchbook, birdbook and leash for your pet.

Oracle State Park is located northeast of Tucson in the northern foothills of the Catalina Mountains and features quiet picnic spots, miles of hiking trails, stunning views of the mountains, access to the Arizona Trail plus other oak-woodland trails. Restaurants and attractions in the quaint community of Oracle are nearby.

Elevations in the 4,000-acre wildlife refuge range from 3,500 to 4,500 feet. The park features a diversity of animals, plant species and rock formations. There are also oak tree-shaded washes, mesquite scrub habitats and riparian woodlands with manzanita and beargrass.

For more information visit the website at AZStateParks.com, call the park office at (520) 895-2425. The Park Entrance Fee is \$7 per vehicle for up to 4 adults.

Free Entry to Grand Canyon on Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

Grand Canyon National Park will join national park units around the country in offering fee-free entry for the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday.

Entrance fees will be waived for all visitors who arrive in the park on Monday, January 21. Visitors who enter (or re-enter) the park before or after January 21 will be charged the regular entrance fee.

Park visitors are reminded that the fee-free designation applies to entrance fees only and does not affect fees for camping, reservations, tours, or use of concessions. Park entrance stations will have park passes such as Interagency Senior, Annual and Access Passes, as well as the new Active Military Passes, available for those who wish to acquire them.

Grand Canyon's South Rim sits at approximately 7,000 feet. As a result, visitors should be prepared for winter weather and driving conditions, and should bear in mind that road closures and temporary suspension of shuttle service may occur with little or no notice as winter weather passes through the area.

This year, additional Grand Canyon fee-free days will occur during National Parks Week (April 22 – 26), on National Park Service's Birthday (August 25), on National Public Lands Day (September 28), and over the Veterans Day Weekend (November 9 – 11).

For more on what there is to see and do in Grand Canyon National Park, please visit the park's web site at www.nps.gov/grca. For more on national park fee-free days, go to www.nps.gov/findapark/feefreeparks.htm.

Calendar of Events

Visit www.ArizonaGuide.com to find information on all the exciting [events, festivals and activities](#) held throughout the Grand Canyon State!

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